

by Congress to fix the problems Hurricane Katrina has exposed.

H.R. 3673—SECOND EMERGENCY
SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my great concern with the situation still being faced by families devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

As needed relief is finally making its way down to the affected region, our thoughts go out to all the victims and their families. Late last week, this body passed a \$10.5 billion aid package that will provide initial funding for immediate and long-term responses. Today, we are passing an additional \$51.8 billion. This funding will cover only a sliver of the final financial toll taken on communities throughout the Gulf Coast and what will be needed for families to re-start their lives. Yet this monetary cost pales in comparison to the immense emotional and human cost that continues to grow.

At the end of the day, the United States government is constitutionally obligated to “insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, [and] promote the general welfare” for all citizens. Particularly during a time of crisis, it is absolutely necessary that these obligations be fulfilled. In that regard, the federal government has failed. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina last week, thousands of families, stranded, injured, homeless, and without basic necessities of water and food waited and waited and waited for emergency relief. For four days, the President, Congress, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) minimized to themselves and to the public the immensity of what was occurring. The very institutions established to serve and protect the American people instead watched and waited as the tragedy grew.

The response of the government to the needs of these communities was demonstrably and woefully inadequate. I am pleased that an investigation has been launched to discover why the government agencies entrusted with providing emergency aid failed to respond in any meaningful way to the grave situation. Ultimately, we must determine what changes need to be made in order to ensure that future relief efforts are not hindered by incompetent management or bureaucratic obstructions, as they were last week. However, we will only find true accountability with a bipartisan, independent commission to investigate what went wrong.

Natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina can never be prevented, no matter how well prepared we may be. However, shifting natural conditions on the planet indicate that we may soon be seeing an increase in such events. In early August 2005, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) released a report stating that environmental conditions guaranteed an increase in destructive and powerful hurricanes along the Gulf Coast. Already this year we have seen an increase in hurricanes along the Gulf Coast. Such a warning has been voiced for some time, and we are now seeing the results if we continue to

ignore such information. Additionally, the New Orleans Times-Picayune predicted this very disaster as recently as 2002. President Bush’s assertion that “no one could have predicted” this disaster is clearly, and tragically, wrong.

Through the generosity of millions of Americans, those families affected by the hurricane are receiving some of the help they need, and I have absolutely no doubt that they will prevail in rebuilding their lives and their community. We must pledge to do all we can to help.

As we proceed with the long-term solutions, we need to make sure we do the right thing here in Congress. It is our job to make choices and these choices reflect our priorities. I hope the majority will acknowledge that many of the choices made in recent years were ill-advised. Together, we need to put the financial resources to work to improve the lives of survivors. It is not the time for business-as-usual, cut-taxes-at-all-costs, short-change-the-working-poor proposals we have come to expect from the majority. We can do better, and we must.

H.R. 3673—SUPPLEMENTAL
APPROPRIATION

HON. THOMAS E. PETRI

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, in less than a week, we will have passed supplementals providing over \$60 billion in emergency aid to respond to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. We have been told we are spending about \$2 billion a day in hurricane response efforts. We all want to care for those who have suffered damaged homes and those who have been left homeless, many with literally only the shirts on their backs, by this terrible storm. I realize many face an uncertain future with unemployment gone and only questions remaining.

At the same time, \$60 billion spent over 6 weeks creates an opportunity for waste and unwise spending decisions. I want the funds to go to those who need it and those who have and continue to suffer. But we also owe it to our constituents—and indeed perhaps even more to Katrina’s victims—that these funds be spent based on careful consideration of what is needed and what is the best and most effective—and cost effective—method for achieving our goals.

Chairman LEWIS has stressed the accountability provisions included in the bill. The Inspector General of the Homeland Security Department will be monitoring the expenditure of these funds. The Appropriations Committee will receive weekly reports on how the funds are allocated.

We all want to respond to this disaster in the most compassionate way possible. But we also have an obligation as elected officials to ensure that funds we spend are carefully considered, used for true critical and emergency functions, and spent wisely.

Once all are out of harms way with immediate needs met, I hope that we will slow down and move forward in a deliberative way as we consider continued response and, most importantly, long-term plans for rebuilding the Gulf Coast. We will be held accountable, as we should be, for the investment of the funds.

While the American people want us to be generous, there are many hard decisions ahead. It is incumbent on all of us in the Congress to ensure that we invest our taxpayer dollars in the most responsible way.

SECOND EMERGENCY SUPPLE-
MENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR
HURRICANE KATRINA RESPONSE

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, my thoughts and prayers go out to the people of the Gulf Coast and their loved ones who have been so profoundly affected by Hurricane Katrina. My deepest gratitude goes out to all those engaged in relief efforts.

Our nation is grieving. The images and stories broadcast from flooded streets and makeshift shelters will be forever engraved in our minds and hearts. Hurricane Katrina has collectively wounded us. But, out of this anguish, an intense commitment has emerged—to stand alongside the brave survivors during this time of recovery.

While Katrina’s historic rampage of the Gulf Coast can be measured in hours, recovery will likely be recorded in terms of years and billions of dollars. Last week, Congress provided a “down payment” of \$10.5 billion. We are here today to approve a \$51.8 billion disaster relief package to aid further recovery efforts. All support—given recent events—carry grave concerns about how money will flow to those suffering from this natural and man-made disaster.

Like many, I am alarmed over apparent delays, and lack of communication and coordination. But, these frustrations cannot distract us from the work ahead of us. Our priorities are clear: Focus on Katrina’s survivors, first.

Many of the survivors have lost loved ones, are homeless, and face the terrifying prospect of starting their lives over. Nevertheless, they have demonstrated a remarkable resiliency in a desire to move forward and need support to do so.

Families have been separated, and must be reunited.

The injured and sick need care and treatment, including a wide array of mental health services.

My office has been in direct contact with local disaster response officials to ensure that San Diego’s available resources are aiding those suffering in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Members of San Diego’s Urban Search-and-Rescue Taskforce have left for the Gulf Coast to provide assistance, as well as a variety of first responders and military personnel.

After we have seen to the needs of those hurt by Katrina, let’s look at the broader picture. There must be a thorough and independent review of the response effort in the coming days. We need to answer the serious questions and concerns Hurricane Katrina raised about emergency planning. Namely, we need to address the care and evacuation for the vulnerable in our communities when emergencies arise.

On a personal note—based on my volunteer experience with the Red Cross after Katrina’s landfall—we need to develop an efficient